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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6017  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3711  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3570  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4259  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4198  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1324  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001624

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [EPET](#) [PREL](#) [MD](#) [RO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: ROMANIAN RELATIONSHIP STRONGER  
POLITICALLY THAN ECONOMICALLY

REF: ASHGABAT 0948

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) a  
nd (D).

¶1. (C) On December 14, Poloff met with Romanian Embassy Political Officer Laurentiu Ciocan to discuss Romania's relationship with Turkmenistan. Ciocan described relations as limited, especially in the economic arena. There is only one Romanian company in Turkmenistan with Romanian employees -- Petrom, an oil and gas company. Two other Romanian companies have a local presence, but their offices are run by Turkmen employees. A Romanian construction company closed in 2008, for reasons that Ciocan did not specify. He mentioned that it was hard to convince Romanian companies to come to Turkmenistan because of the difficult investment climate. He then joked that, in Turkmenistan, "there are only two speeds, stop and reverse."

¶2. (C) Politically, the Romanians have a more robust relationship with Turkmenistan, although they only have three diplomats at their embassy in Ashgabat. Ciocan noted that there were six high-level visits between the two countries during the last two years, including two presidential visits, two parliamentary visits, and several trips by the ministers of foreign affairs (reftel). The last of these trips was by Turkmenistan's Parliamentary Chairperson Akja Nurberdiyeva to meet with her Romanian counterpart in September.

¶3. (C) The Romanian Government sponsors study programs for about 50 students from Turkmenistan. There are two distinct official programs. One is run and paid for entirely by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The other is governed by a joint agreement between the Romanian MFA and the Turkmenistan Ministry of Education, but still paid for by the Romanian MFA. Turkmen students can also study in Romanian universities independently of an official program, assuming they are willing to pay the tuition themselves. The Turkmen students in Romania study technical specialties, including oil and gas, electricity, and economics. Ciocan

said they had not had any trouble getting permission for Turkmen students to study in Romania, but that it had taken a long time to get the initial agreement (NOTE: Romanian Ambassador Radu Horumba told us that the final document was hammered together during Berdimuhamedov's visit to Romania in 2008. Horumba (strictly protect) has complained about the preparation of the students chosen by the Ministry of Education. The Romanians had planned to provide language training, but were dismayed to learn that the students also lacked an understanding of basic math and science, even though they were to study engineering and oil and gas. END NOTE.)

14. (C) Ciocan told Poloff that there were probably only about 50 Romanian citizens in Turkmenistan, including the Embassy employees and their families. The majority of the Romanian citizens work either for French construction firm Bouygues or for offshore oil projects. However, the Romanian embassy also assists Moldovans who are trying to regain Romanian citizenship. Moldovans who had Romanian citizenship from the period when Moldova was part of Romania, as well as their children and grandchildren, are eligible. Ciocan noted that although there are many Moldovans still in Turkmenistan, most of the potential Romanian citizenship cases had already been resolved.

15. (C) COMMENT: Ciocan was fairly downbeat about Turkmenistan, but it was unclear whether he was making jokes about the country for Poloff's benefit, or whether he truly believed what he was saying. He said that he would prefer to only serve in Turkmenistan for two years, instead of the four

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that he was committed to. He added that the country reminded him of Romania under Ceausescu (a remark his ambassador has often shared). Romania's relations with Turkmenistan will probably remain limited, unless the Nabucco pipeline is built and Turkmenistan gas starts flowing through it. However, Ciocan's comments indicated that the Romanian Government would like to expand economic interaction with Turkmenistan, particularly in the energy sphere since Nabucco is a Romanian priority. END COMMENT.  
CURRAN